

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 IO-14 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 EB-08 TRSE-00 SIL-01 LAB-04
COME-00 OMB-01 STR-07 AGRE-00 PC-05 OPIC-06 XMB-04
FRB-01 ITC-01 /132 W

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1757

INFO AMEMBASSY MASERU PRIORITY

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E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, SOCI, LT

SUBJECT: LESOTHO MOHAIR: POSSIBLE US ASSISTANCE TO IMPROVE
STATUS OF WOMEN IN LESOTHO

1. VISITING AMERICAN SPECIALIST IN TAPESTRY WEAVING, DESIGN
AND PRODUCTION, MS. DALE EGEE, WHO IS CURRENTLY IN BOTSWANA FOLLO-
WING SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO LESOTHO IN A WAY THAT HAS GREAT POTENTIAL
FOR ENCHASING ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY BY GREATLY STRENGHENING
EARNING POWER. I REFER TO SUBJECT OF LESOTHO MOHAIR EXPORTS
AND THE FACT THAT MOHAIR IS NOT ACCORDED PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT
ON U.S. GSP LIST.

2. IN RESPONSE DTO MY REQUEST, MS. EGEE HAS SET FORTH THE BACK-
GROUND DATA AND RATIONALE IN SUPPORT OF GRANTING PREFERENCE TO
MOHAIR FROM LESOTHO IN A LETTER TO ME DATED MARCH 8.

3. IN HER LETTER, MS. EGEE STATES AS FOLLOWS:

QUOTE DURING MY TOUR IN MASERU, LESOTHO, I MADE VISITS TO MANY
OF THE TAPESTRY WORKSHOPS AND TO THE CARE MOHAIR SPINNING PROJECT.

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AS YOU LESOTHO IS ONE OF THE TOP 4 MOHAIR PRODUCERS IN THE WORLD.
FUTHERMORE, MOHAIR IS VIRTUALLY ITS ONLY EXPORT PRODUCT.
VISITING THE CARE PROJECT, THE DIRECTOR, MR. BRICE ATKINSON,
CALLED MY ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING FACT: WHILE LESOTHO IS
CLASSIFIED AS ONE OF THE 25 NEEDIEST NATIONS BY THE U.N. AND IS
ON THE U.S. GSP LIST (GENERALIZED SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES), THIS
ONE POTENTIAL EXPORT TO THE U.S. DOES NOT IN FACT, RECEIVE

PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT. ACCORDING TO WHAT CARE HAS BEEN ABLE TO ASCERTAIN, MOHAIR YARN IN LENGTHS OVER 3 INCHES IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE GSP PRODUCT LIST. IT IS TRUE THAT THE U.S. IS ALSO A MOHAIR PRODUCER. HOWEVER, TO MR. ATKINSON'S KNOWLEDGE, U.S. MOHAIR IS IN AN ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT CATEGORY, BEING RAISED FOR BULK AND WEIGHT ONLY AND NOT EVEN CLASSIFIED. IT IS SOLD IN THE RAW STATE ONLY. THEREFORE, IT WOULD SEEM THAT LESOTHO'S PRODUCTION OF TAPESTRY AND HANDICRAFT YARNS WOULD NOT COMPETE WITH THE U.S. MARKET. THE CARE YARN IS HANDSPUN, PART OF A LABOR-INTENSIVE PROJECT TO EMPLOY AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE. BOTH MR. ATKINSON AND I ASSUME THAT THIS IS A SIMPLE OVERSIGHT. WE ARE SURE THAT THE AMERICAN INTENTION, AS WITNESSED BY THE HEAVY INVESTMENTS OF AID, PEACE CORPS AND OTHER U.S. AID AGENCIES, IS TO HELP LESOTHO TO BE AN ECONOMICALLY VIABLE NATION. ANYTHING YOU CAN DO TO OPEN THE AMERICAN MARKET TO LESOTHO'S STRUGGLING MOHAIR INDUSTRY WOULD BE MOST APPRECIATED IN LESOTHO. UNQUOTE.

4. FOR MASERU: SUGGEST YOU MAY WISH TO FORWARD TO DEPT. FIGURES ON CURRENT VALUE OF MOHAIR EXPORTS TO THE US AND COMMENT AS DESIRED ON MS. EGEE'S LETTER.

5. COMMENT: FROM ALL INDICATIONS, THERE IS NO SINGLE ACTION USG COULD TAKE THAT WOULD CONTRIBUTE MORE TO THE CAUSE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY IN GENERAL DEVELOPMENT IN PARTICULAR THAN TO GRANT PREFERENCE TO LESOTHO MOHAIR. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPT. COMMENTS UNCLASSIFIED

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ON THE ABOVE AND ANY INDICATION OF PROSPECTS FOR ASSISTING GOL WHICH IS, AS NOTED, ONE OF THE TRULY LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD. NORLAND

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